Comic Fandom Quarterly

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Bob Kline Interview!

Also:

Before They Were Pros!

The Geek Inherit The Earth

Back in the early 80s, John Byrne famously related a story about how shortly after taking over writing and drawing The Fantastic Four, he was at a dinner party with a number of people unfamiliar with comics. When they asked him what he did for a living, he stated he was the writer and artist of the FF comic book. The reaction he received was one of utter bafflement that anyone, let alone an adult, could or would actually have a *job* making comics.

His embarrassment was so profound that for the next few years he (possibly apocryphally) made occupations when asked by non-comic people what his job was. He would tell them he was a dentist, or an architect, or a lawyer, *anything* other than being associated with comic books in any way.

Cut to 30 years later, and I myself was recently at a Buffalo Wild Wings having lunch when the waitress, a bright and sweet young woman named Alyssa, got into a conversation with me about working retail and/or food service, and had she seen the movie Waiting? Yes, she had and we talked about that and how great Ryan Reynolds was in it and wow wasn't Deadpool also such a great movie? This was a random lunch and not only was she versed in the current crop of comic book movies, she was a huge fan. The kicker was when I mentioned I was in the comics industry, she was actually *impressed* and rattled off a few other people she knew, including her step-father, who were fans of the comics as well and wouldn't they love to talk with me! Needless to say, I left her a nice tip.

But what a difference from Byrne's time! How times have changed!

We, the geeks, the nerds, the comic fans, are finally having our day in the sun. Comic books are no longer seen as an immature (well, maybe a little…), childish pursuit. They are seen as, if not quite literature, at least the uniquely American art form that has given rise to iconic characters and vivid, colorful storytelling. All the belief that fans have held over the years that the awesome stories and characters that comics have produced would make phenomenal movies has finally coming to fruition.

The knock-on effect spills over into other areas too. Convention participation by a broad spectrum of fans, cosplayers, and families is at an all-time high, heights never dreamed of when cons started out in the late 60s. People from all walks of life, backgrounds and professions are familiar with the movies and characters now, and turn out in droves to the cons. It is not unheard of for a brand new con, if well run, to go from a couple thousand attendees to thousands in just 2 or 3 consecutive years.

On the big screen, comic book movies are the A-List now, the marquee titles, the tentpoles. Comic book movies are an event. Whereas just 20 years ago they struggled to connect even with the dedicated comic fan base, now comic book movies are highly anticipated go-to pop-culture destinations.

Comic movies are cool, and comic books by extension are finally getting their due as a vital art form providing fantastic source material for an ever-expanding universe of popular and well-made films.

-Robin Dale

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Coming Soon
CFQ #7 - Comic Book TV Shows Part 1!
CFQ #8 - Comic Book TV Shows Part 2!
CFQ #9 - Comic Book TV Shows Part 3!

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A Conversation With Bob Kline

by Ken Meyer, Jr.

Ken Meyer, jr: So what would you describe this room as?

Bob Kline: It's the room that reflects all of who I am, well maybe not all, just a portion lets say. It's the room of inspiration and a lot of it is given over to the movies that I love. And right there is that EC bound volume, all the way to the left.

KMj: Oh right. Yeah you know I don't think I've ever seen those.

BK: Well that was somebody I think doing it on their own, they just decided "OK I'm gonna put these comics that I love in a leather binding." It was clearly back in the 50s by somebody.

KMj: Do you have any 8-track tapes in here too? (Laughter)

BK: Not in here! I used to own a Corvette that had an 8-track tape player in it so I had some for a while but those things were ruthless.

Bob with his Emmy win

KMj: Yeah I just got rid of a whole collection of cassettes that I've had since college. I just gave them to somebody.

BK: And you can see what these are, these are Laser Discs.

KMj: Yeah that's what made me think of the 8-tracks!

BK: I went Laser Disc crazy when those came out. It was largely because my mother in law had a top-loading Laser Disc player she was using for work and she didn't want it any more because they stop using it for that, so she gave it to me and I think the first thing I bought was the first *Batman*.

KMj: You mean the film with Micheal Keaton?

BK: Yeah. And the difference in resolution and quality was so great that I just went nuts. I've got hundreds of Laser Discs. Were you a fan of *Brisco County*?

KMj: Yeah, yeah.

BK: I just love that show. I couldn't believe it wasn't renewed.

KMj: Yeah I know, he's once of those guys that deserves a lot more attention than he gets.

BK: See I wanted *him* to play *John Carter*. He would have been a great *John Carter* in his heyday. He would have been perfect and his tone would have been perfect for that because the whole thing of being overwhelmed and startled and you know dealing with stuff and so on. Especially the *Army of Darkness* Bruce Campbell I think that would have made an even more entertaining *John Carter* movie.

KMj: Yeah they played him [John Carter] maybe a little bit too serious, but I wouldn't want to get into camp at all either, but it's like just his character was maybe just a little too serious, but they just didn't promote it right.

BK: I totally agree with you. I think he could have had more fun with it.

Rocket's Blast Comic Collector #66

KMj: OK we've got some art we can look at.

BK: This one [spaceship print] was done for a fan magazine, I can't remember who printed it. Just your basic science fiction theme. It's got dust and cobwebs. It's #31 down here in the corner, from one of my art shows. You could have purchased for $55 once (laughter). But now that there's so few of these things left in my possession, I tend to kind of want to hang on to them. And this is my membership card in the Ray Harryhausen fan club from when I was just a pre-teen, and it shows that I'm a certified member of the Ray Harryhausen fan club, and Mark McGee was the active president. I think I got a poster for *The Three Worlds of Gulliver* and some stills, some eight-by-ten stills because this was back in the olden days.

This, by the way, is the pile that I want you to take a look at. This is the stuff that I've managed to hang on to. Obviously there was more of this done, but these are all fan magazines that I contributed to, including this thing. Oh and this is the first *Rocket's Blast Comic Collector* [#66] thing that I was referring to. I've done a 3D version of this.

KMj: You mean like a red and blue 3D?

BK: Yes. When I first started working with Photoshop I realized they could make a 3D version of something. You know, moving things around right and left. And it came very successfully, I'm going to have to show you how it works.

KMj: Do you still have it somewhere?

BK: Well I've got a file of it, I think I've got a print somewhere. Yeah I was a big fan of 3D comics.

KMj: I can't remember what, it might have been a comic, where they did a 3D process just by using

I guess blue and red and offsetting it so that you had to use your 3D glasses to see the effect.

BK: Yeah well those first *Tor* comics were done that way. Those are the ones that I have that are original printings.

KMj: Alright. Let's see, why don't you let me hold this stack and I'll see what's in here. I have this, are you actually in this one? That's *Squa Tront* [#4], right?

BK: This is it.

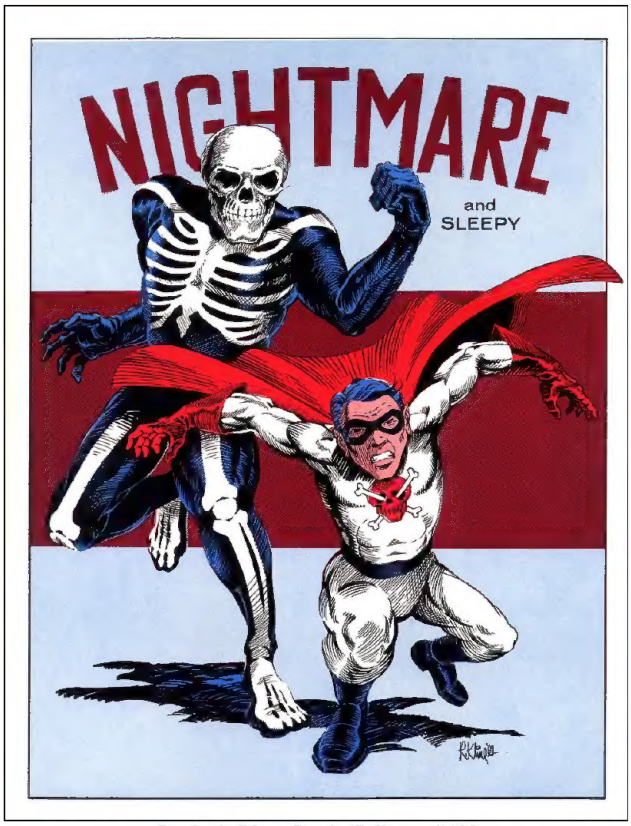
KMj: Oh yeah OK, I remember that drawing now.

BK: And they sat on that for a long time before they ever printed it. In fact I had to write a letter and say "why the hell aren't you printing my drawing!" (laughter)

KMj: I remember this magazine.

BK: It's an ad, Roy Thomas contacted me - oh here's the guy! Gene Colan is the guy I was talking about earlier. He's the guy -

Rocket's Blast Comic Collector #66



Rocket's Blast Comic Collector #102

KMj: With the really loose style -

BK: Yeah and he's got those washes that went on in there. So my thing in here was an ad, it was something that was originally published I think in the one of Gary Groth's things, and I think it was to get you to subscribe to the magazine. It's just one page. Oh here it is!

KMj: Yeah I think I remember that. 1970.

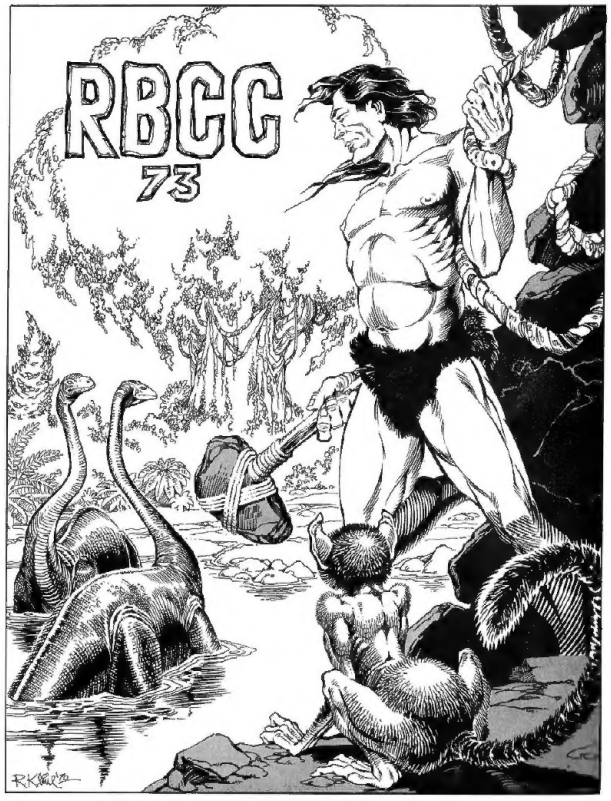
BK: And that drawing was originally was done just, it was based on nothing in particular. It's a joke, it's got multiple choice answers.

KMj: I think you might have mentioned this to me, wasn't this a Conan thing it was also repurposed?

BK: Oh yeah. This was something [*Savage Sword of Conan #5*] that was one of my Conan drawings in Anomaly.

KMj: I saw that, but I don't think I saw that other one. I remember that at least. Were these both in the same issue of whatever was -

BK: I can't remember now. Oh but this one says Gary Groth, so maybe this was in my portfolio. And I think this is the one that prompted Frazetta to say that I was another one of his imitators! And rightly so, I mean I'm clearly working off a lot of his -



Rocket's Blast Comic Collector #100

KMj: There are a couple of guys out there now that are really, really -

BK: Well, Dave Stevens, and Mark Shultz, Ken Kelly for heaven's sake. I think those are in the second issue of Anomaly. And this is the three pager [*Hot Stuf*] that is sort of the risqué thing where the woman comes out and smothers the gladiator with her breasts!

KMj: This is one of the things that couldn't have been up on the wall I guess.

BK: This was written by what's his name, the editor, he basically came up with the idea, Sal Quartucchio. It's sort of weird.

KMj: Wow this is really -

BK: Ancient.

KMj: Yeah. This has a lot of the same people that were in a lot of the fanzines of the time, I mean Bill Black, J.D. Jones.

BK: Fantucchio is probably in there. Oh this is the thing [*The Golden Age #3*] that...

KMj: The superheroes that you didn't know anything about?

BK: Yeah that G. B. [Love] wanted me to do. So I got reference to do these characters, and then he subsequently put this on the cover of the *Rocket's Blast Comic Collector* with his own coloring.

The Golden Age (SFCA) #3

KMj: In fact I just finished reading a John Adkins Richardson interview that Gary Groth did, it's in that fanzine I just showed you. And this I have -

BK: I know that one! Actually I took a photograph of my own model of the Enterprise and traced it off to do this perspective, because the Enterprise

is *really* hard to draw. I tried a couple of things and it just wasn't coming together, so that was the answer.

KMj: And I think I might have asked you before but it did you actually do the background too? And the title and everything?

BK: Yeah I did all the color on this, and all the separations. So I did the magenta, cyan, and yellow.

KMj: I've heard of *Trumpet* but never seen it before.

BK: This was a portfolio that they sat on for a long time before they printed it.

KMj: See there several in here that I'd love to scan to actually use in my column that I've just never seen before. Yeah these were done before most of the stuff that I remember seeing from you, this was more like '71, '72.

BK: And again to the degree that I could do it these were very influenced by Frazetta and Williamson and those guys.

KMj: When you scan these, especially the stuff that would be the kind of thing you know you'd be able to sell at a gallery or something, do you scan them at a high resolution, do you have higher res versions? You probably already know this but there are several websites out there where you can deposit your high-res scans that then they can sell prints of for you, you know. If you want to do something like that, I can point you to one of those sites.

BK: Well, when I retire (laughter) I have all kinds of plans for doing that kind of thing. Right now, I don't even want to try to start to do something like that because it's so time

consuming. In fact the block of time that we're experiencing today is my free time, and that is it for the week, and the rest of the time I have little or no control over it.

KMj: So you have an actual date you're retiring right?

BK: Not until October. I might be pushed in to it sooner if I get laid off, because I'm not gonna go looking for another job. So I may retire sooner, it jus all depends on Disney right now. If Disney decides to give me the heave-ho again, I'll probably just say "Nah" because I'm past the age that I need to be by far. We've got medical for the rest of our lives, so we're all set.

graduation present.

And that picture of me when I was 20 or so with my grandmother [Bob & Butzie] is watercolor, a print, my daughter has the original.

KMj: Oh yeah I was going to ask about that, because that must have been you close to the time of doing the fanzines, right?

BK: Yes, right yes. I was in the Air Force and I was visiting my grandparents in Philadelphia. Before Missy and I got married, but that's my grandmother who's in the photograph down below at a younger age.

Bob & Butzie

KMj: (Referring to the Prague piece) That was watercolor, that looked pretty time consuming. Was that a photograph you actually shot yourself?

BK: No, I found a photograph that the woman who commissioned me to paint that for her son, her son had spent a semester in Prague studying film and she wanted to give it to him for his

KMj: Yeah I remember that that's pretty much what you looked like in the pictures in the Gary Groth interview, pretty much exactly that.

BK: So I was doing stuff for fanzines when I looked like that. But I did that for Katie when she graduated from N.Y.U. because she and I - in that picture I was the same age she was when she graduated from N.Y.U. I had gotten in to painting like that because of my experience on

Three Musketeers where we painted it in that controlled manner in order to create backgrounds that felt really solid, but still looked like the era in which transparent watercolor was used, like *Snow White* and *Pinocchio*. And course older paintings are looser because I was enamored of the John Pike/Alex Kotzky school of watercolor, you know, that loose more calligraphic way of painting.

KMj: Really part of the reason I started doing watercolor was because it seemed like the easiest, fastest, and most inexpensive way to get color on black and white illustrations I had done. Then it took me a long time before I started just painting, period, without having to have lines underneath.

BK: Yeah. Both of those are. The one on the right is based on a photograph of Palm Canyon up above Palm Springs up in the hills there, and the other one is a rhinoceros from the LA zoo deposited on a beach in Monterrey (laughter) which makes perfect sense. And this is my brother in laws swimming pool at the house where he used to live with his first wife.

KMj: Yeah this is a lot more, I guess expressionistic than some of the other stuff. Is it pastel?

BK: Or impressionistic, probably. Yeah it's pastel, and sometimes at family gatherings when conversations went to areas that I wasn't even remotely interested in, I'd sit there and draw instead. Which is pretty regular actually.

Prague

BK: The great thing about it is, it's nowhere near the trouble that oil painting is.

KMj: Yeah I've only done some oils, and it's definitely the hardest part for me is seeing and replicating the color. Just the physicality of oils is difficult. And this [Jungle Stream] must be acrylic?

And this is based on a photograph, I think it's based on a photograph, I don't think I painted it on site. It's Maui, and that's Molokai across there under the clouds.

KMj: Which is...a mountain range? What is that?

BK: It's another island and it's the one that is famous for having the leper colony.

KMj: You know *Papillion*, the film? I know there was a leper colony scene or series of scenes, but I guess that must have been somewhere in France. Oh and this is really loose too.

BK: That was my favorite style for quite a while.

KMj: That's something I have to sort of make myself do. I tend to be tight by default and I have to make myself do loose -

BK: Well I'll tell you the reason I've wrestled with it, because in recent years I've done really tight watercolors in the wake of having worked on this style for *Three Musketeers*, but I feel like if I'm not in complete control of the piece I'm working on, I'm in danger of wasting the little time that I have to do it, and so over the years I got more and more controlled with my work because I didn't want to do something that I had to toss because it didn't work out. When I was younger I didn't feel like I was wasting time if I had to do that, plus it was all new then and it was like "This is the way." If I'm going to do gallery art, this is how I want to do it. And so it was, first of all, the love affair with the painters that worked that way and wanted to be like them, and then secondly not feeling that, you know, I was wasting time if it didn't work out.

KMj: Did you follow many of the mainstream illustrators like in the 70s and 80s, like Bernie Fuchs and Bob Peak and all those guys?

BK: I knew who they were, I wasn't as excited about them when they were doing stuff in print. For some reason I wanted stuff that was more realistic and less design-y. I felt like these guys are designing a page, decorating a page, whereas the artists I loved the most were creating a world that you could literally walk into if you wanted to, I mean if you could get past the picture plane. Because it was a real world, it's the MC Wyeth/Schoonover -

KMj: Oh! You know what? Did you know about the show that's going on the Weisman museum in Peperdine right now? You both probably want to go because it's an American illustration show, and I think it's only there for another couple of weeks, but it has a bunch of originals: Wyeth, Mead Schaeffer, Harvey Dunn, Lyendecker, Rockwell.

BK: All the greats!

KMj: Two big floors of all these originals, it just blew me away. Because I very seldom lived in a city that had a museum that would have that sort of stuff. I mean they might have some contemporary art, they might have some fine artists from the past I might like, but they wouldn't have a lot of these illustrators from the classic era of illustration. But this show, that's exactly what it is.

BK: I have seen a show like that, I saw it in Santa Barbara, they had it at their art museum, and it was wonderful! There were two shows: there was the one exactly like what you're describing, and then in another gallery they had a show, and I can't remember the name of the artist, but he was a pre-production designer/artist for Cecil B. DeMille, and there were all these drawing and paintings that he had done. And the guy had this incredible flair for painting, very much along the line of those classic illustrators you just named. And yet I think he worked to a large degree in the film industry so his stuff didn't really see print that much. And I love seeing the Wyeth paintings that are huge, and all the others because they did, they worked very large.

KMj: Yet they've got that one huge Wyeth that sort of looks like Prince Valiant that I guess Prince Valiant was almost sort of visually based on by [Hal] Foster and a few of his other well-known ones too.

BK: Now we could to back here, there's a few paintings back here that we could talk about. Oh look at this? This is what my wife does! She makes quilts.

KMj: Oh I have a friend that does that and actually goes to shows.

BK: And she does that and has won ribbons. And there's me, there's the history of me there. We did. that photo montage for my 60th birthday. And most of the pictures are me growing up, and you can see me in the cub scouts, and there I am in my Air Force uniform, and next to that I an in kindergarten, and you can see me in my Boy Scout uniform holding an iguana in my hand.

KMj: Yeah I had an iguana in the Philippines when I lived there.

BK: Was it one of the green ones? The king dinosaur iguana? You know the one I'm talking about?

KMj: I don't know but it was a green iguana.

BK: There's a movie, a real cheap-o movie called *King Dinosaur* and it's an iguana, it's hilarious! MST3K has done a version of that, very funny. Uh oh, pizza!

(break for pizza, recording resumes in the middle of a discussion)

BK: And it was being set up as a kind of soap opera for late night, it was going to be on at 11 or 11:30, so it had its risque aspects. Oh and Stan Freberg was like the head surgeon at the hospital and he was a lion.

KMj: Now Stan Freberg, I mean that's a name I'm really familiar with, but not the exact discipline of what he did usually. I mean was he just a voice actor of was he a creator in general?

BK: He was a creator. He's famous for doing the really off-the-wall hilarious commercials that preceded all of the funny commercials you see now-a-days. I mean when he was doing them, he was the only one doing them. He did Jeno's Pizza Rolls, he did a great big musical number thing for a soup company. But anyway, he started off doing voice at Warner Brothers for characters that Mel Blanc didn't do, like - do you remember seeing the cartoon of Pete The Puma? (does voice of Pete) "He talks like this! Like he was totally retarded and drunk!" And he got hit in the head by Bugs [Bunny] and Bugs was having him for a tea party, do you want one lump or two? "Well I'd like two lumps!" and Bugs would hit him in the head. He was the voice of the beaver in *Lady and the Tramp*.

KMj: So was he mainly known as a voice actor at the time, and then went in to different stuff?

BK: He did at first, but then did a series of novelty records, *St George and the Dragonet*, he did *Green Christmas*, which is like scrooge but an advertising company. These were all things that preceded any other comics doing send-ups.

He'd do send-ups of Elvis Presley records, *Heartbreak Hotel* and stuff like that. And you can still get his stuff. One of his big successes was around the Kennedy era. He did a thing called *Stan Freberg Presents The United States of America*.

KMj: See maybe that's where, I never actually physically seen his name in print. Because I thought I remember not even hearing about it, but actually a visual image of his name from somewhere.

BK: He basically dealt with sound. He hardly ever did anything of his own on television or film or anything like that. Although he is in *It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World,* he plays like a desk jockey in the police office. But he did commercials to sell *It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*. His commercials were known for saying "Funnier than *Cleopatra*!" which was a big deal when that movie came out and it was around the same time.

KMj: (Reaches for *Spectrum* volumes on the shelf) Oh you know what? Maybe I can grab one of these, to show off some of my stuff.

BK: Oh please, let me get that! Which one?

KMj: Any of the volumes from one to five. I know I missed one, but I was in five of the first six. It was a huge deal.

BK: Oh absolutely! From time to time I get asked, "Well why aren't you submitting?" Well, because I don't have anything I want to submit, and by the time I do I'm sure it'll be the kind of deal like *Squa Tront* where it will sit on the shelf forever (laughter).

KMj: See there's one that was -

BK: Oh gosh, yes! Yes!

KMj: It was part of a graphic novel that I did, it was just one page of it that I liked.

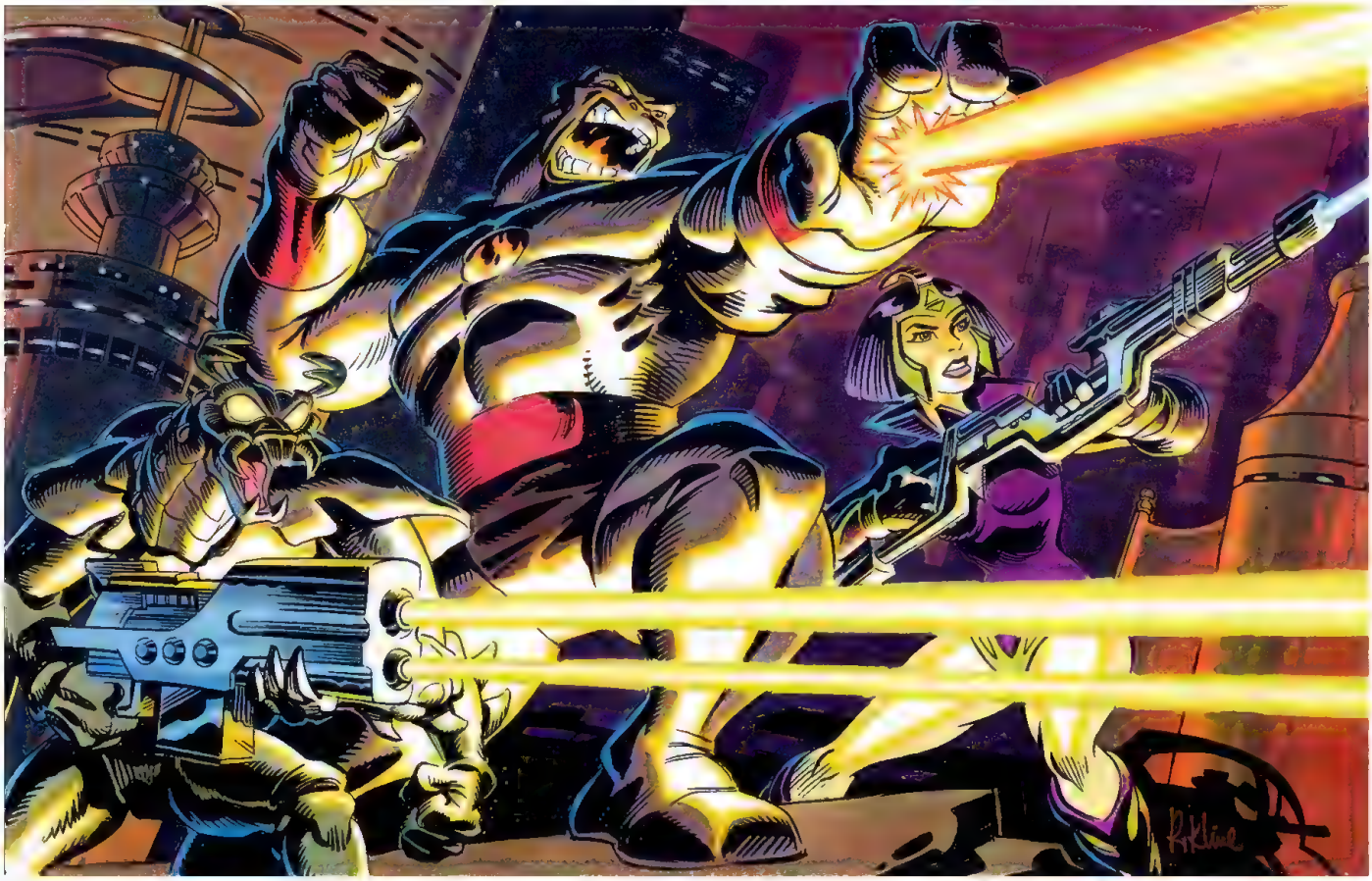
BK: How wonderful! That is so great!

Bob and the Filmation crew

KMj: She's actually a belly dancer now, she's incredibly beautiful. I worked with her before she got into that at Sony when I worked there for a couple of years.

BK: More, more! That's not in your ten favorites is it? That song, that comic attack?

KMj: I don't know, I can't remember.



BK: I remember something that has a smaller appeal to it...

KMj: Well yeah, I mean I've done a lot of like vampire type stuff that sort of follows in that same sort of look. Oh that's a new cover!

BK: Yeah I had to get one and two as reprints because I wasn't in the loop yet when those ones came out.

KMj: This is small, this one here. This was from the cover of a comic that I did back in the 90s.

BK: And here you're sharing [the page] with Steve Hickman. Now those are guys that I knew, I knew Steve Hickman and in fact there a collaboration on one of the websites where I was inking his work. I can't remember which one it's on, I can't remember if I grabbed them or not, but I was disappointed because I didn't really like his drawing, and he was disappointed because he didn't really like my inking. So we didn't do much more after that, and I didn't do the whole story. I think I did the first couple or three pages and somebody else finished it after. But yeah there were things about his drawing that just drove me crazy. Now he's of course a much better draftsman today. That's really nice.

KMj: Thanks. This was one of hundreds of role-playing game illustrations that I did for this company called White Wolf Games.

BK: How stunning!

KMj: A lot of vampire stuff, so that was one of a bunch from a book they did that only had me in it, which is pretty rare because usually I just had stuff in a book that had a ton of other artists.

BK: Not only stunning but super creepy! Very nice! Now are these watercolor?

KMj: Yeah most of what I've done was watercolor.

BK: Oh mixed, I see, so yes you do it in watercolor -

KMj: Oh that, well that's only mixed because the three images were watercolor and then I added some digital stuff.

BK: But do you manipulate the paintings at all when you scan them in?

KMj: In this case, no.

BK: Sometimes though?

KMj: Oh not all of them, really. Usually when I scan something it's just to get as close to the original as possible. I haven't really done much digital work. There is actually a digital piece I had done for one of these books but it's really crappy. I think it's only in there because it was the first volume of *Spectrum* and they were really looking for people to get in.

BK: It's really ballooned into something amazing. Every time I get one of these and go through it, because I'm not the kind of store haunting fan that I used to be, I don't see anything that is familiar. I don't see anything that I've seen before. And it's like, wait a minute, what is all this stuff? And of course I'm just completely enamored of the sculptors.

KMj: Yeah there are a couple of guys that show pretty often in *Spectrum*. There's a couple of brothers that I met at a convention, the Shiftwood brothers, that are really, really good. They do a lot of models that they're making them from toys and stuff.

BK: Now Tom goes to the conventions all the time. I haven't been to a convention since 1975.

KMj: The San Diego one?

BK: Yeah.

KMj: Yeah it's gotten so huge now, it's almost more trouble than it's worth.

TOM: It's rough just trying to even get tickets.

KMj: Yeah. And now it's impossible to even go, and it's gotten to the point for me that it's not quite worth the money, because you actually have to pay now for artists alley tables. So now that I'm back in California I might go again if I can get through the process, but right now the process is so difficult and it's like a lottery if you get tickets or not.

I have this *Fantastic Fanzine* I brought with me, has a lot of coverage of the New York convention. I don't know if this is the one that has a picture of you with some other people but I remember there was one that I identified you standing around talking to some people. But this is the 1970 convention, oh no it's 1971, July 4th, New York Comic Art Convention.

BK: Yeah by then I was out here going to school.

KMj: So maybe it was one of the other ones I had. *Fantastic Fanzine* did an awful lot of coverage of conventions and would have all these grainy black and white photographs, so maybe that's what I'm thinking of.

BK: When Gary did the first Washington D.C. convention, and I went to that, and that had all those cronies.

KMj: When you say he did the convention, he went and he did the coverage in one his magazines?

BK: He put it out, he made it happen.

KMj: Oh, oh really? I didn't know that.

BK: And that was before, obviously before I left.

KMj: I mean he still must have been only like in high school or something?

BK: Right. And of course his parents backed him up basically. He'd do all the organization and when somebody had to sign on the dotted line, they would do it.

KMj: Yeah he was a real go-getter.

BK: Well the very idea that his empire is so huge and his catalog is so thick and he's done so much. I have so many of the reprints that he's done. Those Prince Valiant ones that he's doing

now are just astonishing, they're so beautiful. And now he's doing Pogo, and he's done Dennis the Menace.

KMj: Yeah I talked with him a little bit via email, mainly for this fanzine I just finished. He's also someone that's not that easy to track down.

BK: Well and I'm sure he doesn't really want to be bothered because I'm sure people are trying to bother him all the time.

KMj: Yeah. He was pretty nice about it. I had just told him I wanted to send him like 10 or 15 questions via email me and he could just answer as long or as short as he wanted. So he gave me some good information.

Blue Dragon

BK: Well I was very flattered by what he had said about me in your other column, that was great. He was very self-deprecating. Basically remembering what it was like when we were working together, and he actually thinks in retrospect that, here's this guy who's all grown up and here I am just a kid. And I didn't think of myself as being grown up at all.

BK: Did I tell you my convention story? I think it was 1975.

KMj: I don't think so.

BK: I was at the one in '70 in New York, and that's where I met Jim Steranko. I didn't meet any other guys but I saw, because Frazetta was there up close, Wally Wood, Al Williamson. Missy yelled out to Al Williamson, and when he turned around she shot him with a camera with a big flash, and the picture is hilarious because he looks totally surprised and pissed! (laughter) But Steranko looked at my fan work and was very helpful and complimentary and gave great constructive criticism and he was just fabulous. I don't know if I had done, I probably had done that drawing. I probably went to the '75 one because of working on Star Trek, so they wanted me there as a professiona l to talk about that. So I got to go and the high point for me was that the comic convention was so young and there was so little for them to put up and do that they expanded it to include a retrospective of Frank Capra's work, so they had his films going throughout the convention. And he was there, and at the banquet I sat across the table from Frank Capra.

KMj: Well that's a pretty big deal!

BK: Yeah! That was pretty amazing.

Before They Were Pros!

A Look At The Early Work Of Comic Artists

In keeping with the fanzine theme of this issue, we take a look at some early pre (and some post) professional work of some of comics greatest artists.

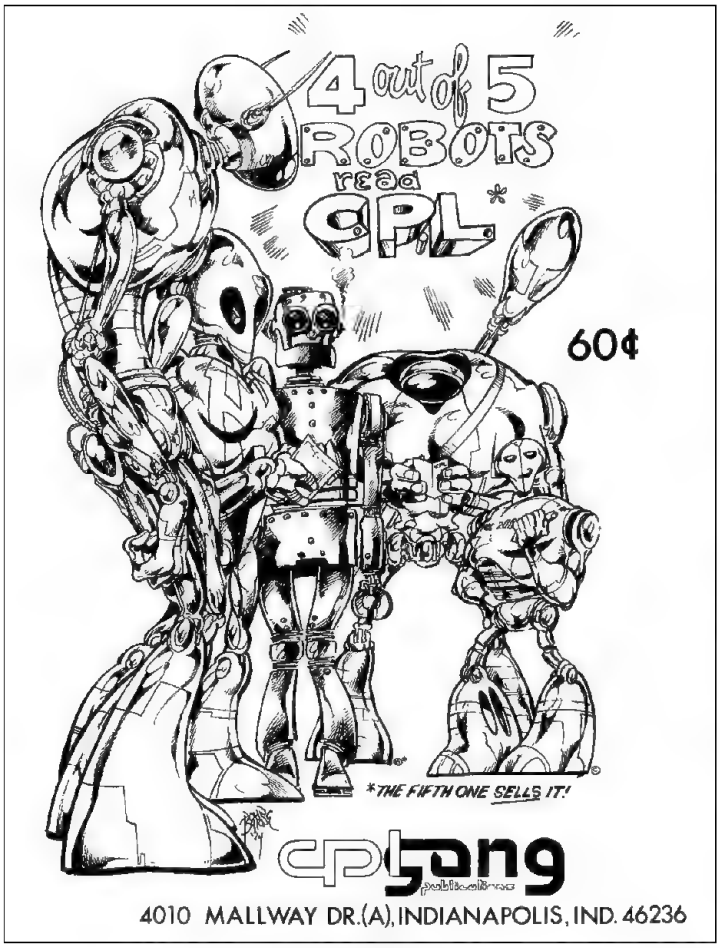
Long-time fan favorite **John Byrne** is a name synonymous with comics. One of the most prolific and gifted comic book writer/artists in the post-Silver Age era, he has worked on virtually every comic book character at both Marvel and DC, where he revamped or revitalized many comics including The Fantastic Four, Wonder Woman, Namor, and Superman.

Even his earliest work is recognizably Byrne and John cut his teeth in the fanzines with work in Contemporary Pictoral Literature (CPL), Charlton Bullseye and even a page in Foom!

Foom #5

Color Version of Robin, originally from Epoch Fanzine

Amazing Science Fantasy #2



Charlton Bullseye #1

Heroes Inc. Presents #2

CPL #8

CPL #12

Next up is ethereal artist **Alan Weiss**. Alan brought a lush, illustrative style to comics with his atmospheric renderings. A student of human anatomy, Alan's work brims with a sophisticated beauty rarely seen in graphic sequential storytelling.

His earliest fanzine work was in the classic *Fantasy Illustrated* #1 in 1964 where he inked a comic strip. He would go on to do a lot of work for *Star Studded Comics*, a hotbed of future comics professionals, and other notable fanzines like *Super-Hero*, *Golden Age*, *Comicdom* and *Eye*. His big break into comics came with his first published back-up story in *House of Secrets #92*. Yeah, THAT one!

Comicdom #2

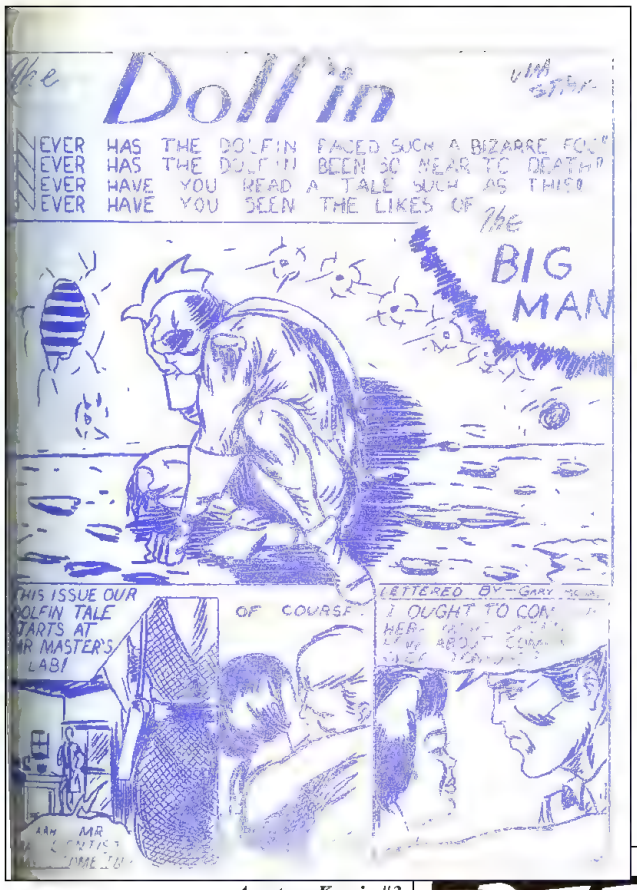
The Golden Age #1

Star Studded Comics #6

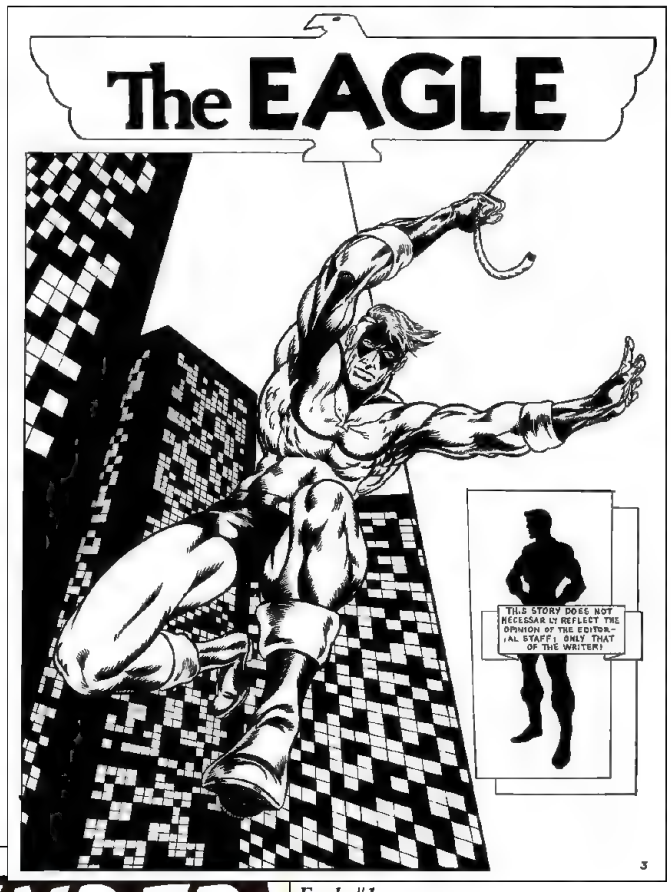
DOCTOR Weird
IT WAS A SEEMINGLY HARMLESS NECKLACE..A SOUVENIR OF AN AFRICAN SAFARI...BUT IT CONTAINED A THREAT OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION BY A SUPER-NATURAL MONSTER! COULD EVEN DR. WEIRD OVERCOME...
"THE CURSE OF SKULLWING!"
STORY Written By LARRY HERNDON
1

Star Studded Comics #9

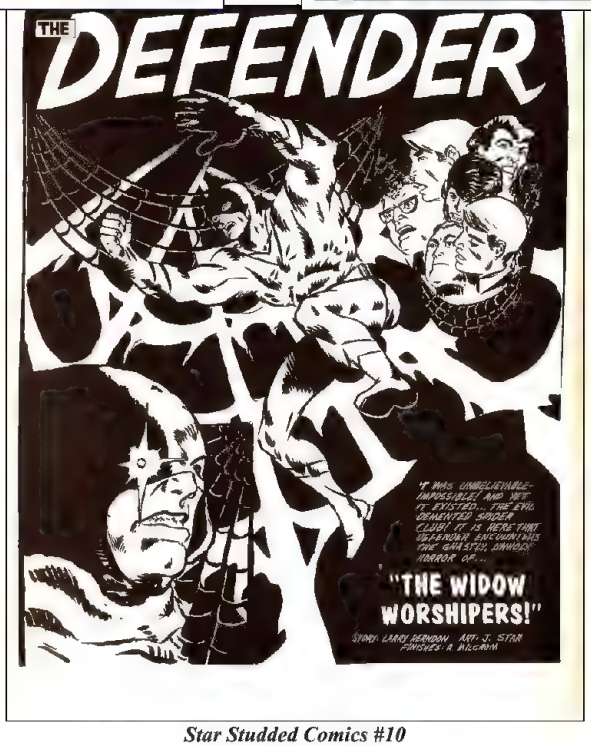
Jim Starlin is best known for his grand cosmic space opera stories and characters, most notably Warlock and Captain Marvel, the creation of Thanos and Dreadstar, and the numerous Infinity series, but his beginnings in comics were notably more down to earth. Jim drew from an early age, but it wasn't until his enlistment in the US Navy in the mid-60s that his art would start to get notice. Jim contributed to many fanzines of the period, including The Rocket's Blast Comic Collector, Star Studded Comics, Eagle and Dr. Weird.


The Doll in
NEVER HAS THE DOLFIN FACED SUCH A BIZARRE FOE
NEVER HAS THE DOLFIN BEEN SO NEAR TO DEATH
NEVER HAVE YOU READ A TALE SUCH AS THIS
NEVER HAVE YOU SEEN THE LIKES OF
THE BIG MAN
THIS ISSUE OUR DOLFIN TALE STARTS AT MR MASTER'S LAB!
OF COURSE
LETTERED BY-GARY
I OUGHT TO CON

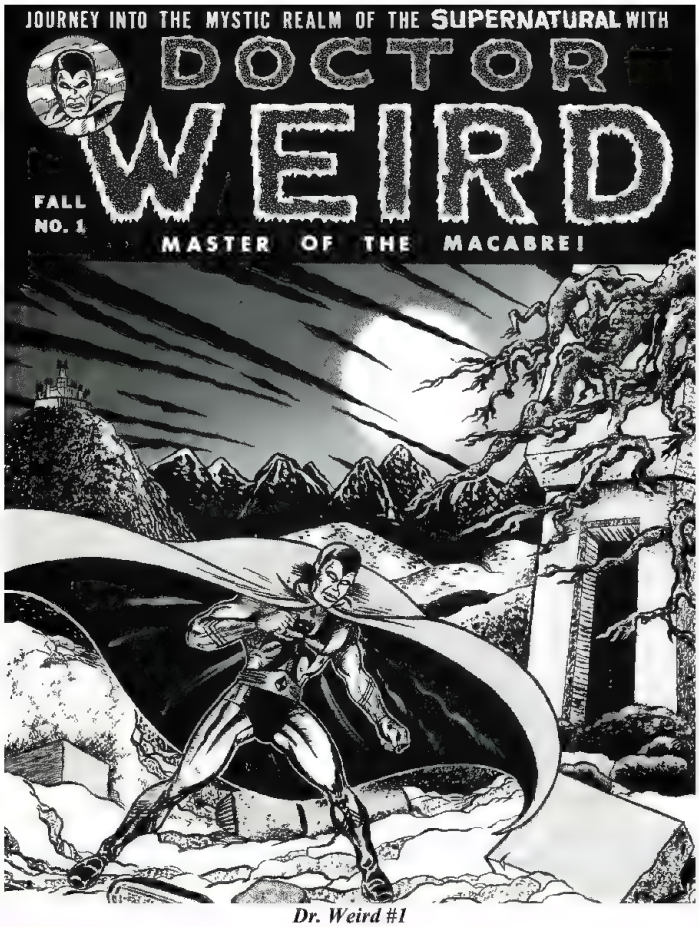
Amateur Komix #3



Eagle #1



Star Studded Comics #10



Dr. Weird #1

SHAKING OFF THE EFFECTS OF THE BLAST, THE DEFENDER STRUGGLES TO HIS FEET IN TIME TO SEE...
POWER DIVING FEET FIRST AT ME!?
WATCH IT, POWIE OL' KIO! YOU CAN GET FLAT FEET THAT WAY!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S COMING OFF, BUT POWERMAN'S FIGHTING FOR BLOOD!
THE DEFENDER MAKES A QUICK RETREAT BUT SUDDENLY HALTS!
UNEXPECTEDLY, THE ACTION ACE DIGS HIS HANDS DEEP INTO THE GROUND AND...
14
HEAVING THE STONE AT POWERMAN...
SLASH!!
BUT EVEN AFTER SUCH A TERRIFIC IMPACT, POWERMAN FIGHTS ON WITH REDOUBLED FURY!
WHAM
YOU FOOL! THIS ISN'T SOME INCOMPETENT LIKE DR. Y YOU'RE FIGHTING! THIS IS POWERMAN!
YOU MUST LIKE THAT NAME OF YOURS! YOU USE IT ENOUGH!
15

Star Studded Comics #8

In 1965, one of the most respected and talented of illustrators ever to grace comics burst upon the comic scene. With his dramatic use of light, shadow and deep blacks paired with an incredible sense of layout, design and detail, and impeccably composed drawings, **Bernie Wrightson's** work was influenced by EC comics art, which Bernie expanded and took to a whole other level.

Appearing as a fully-formed artist right from the get-go, Bernie's first work appeared in *Creepy #9* in 1965. His early work would appear in several fanzines, mostly pinups and fully rendered illustrations, until 1968 when he landed a job at DC and started doing sequential work as a professional. Bernie was just 20 years old. At DC, he would work on many of the horror titles that were experiencing a resurgence due to the loosening of the Comics Code restrictions, eventually culminating in his co-creation with Len Wein of Swamp Thing.

While not as prolific as some of his peers, Wrightson's work is matchless in his style and expression, which for several decades has given us some of the finest comics ever made. A truly unique voice in the world of comics.

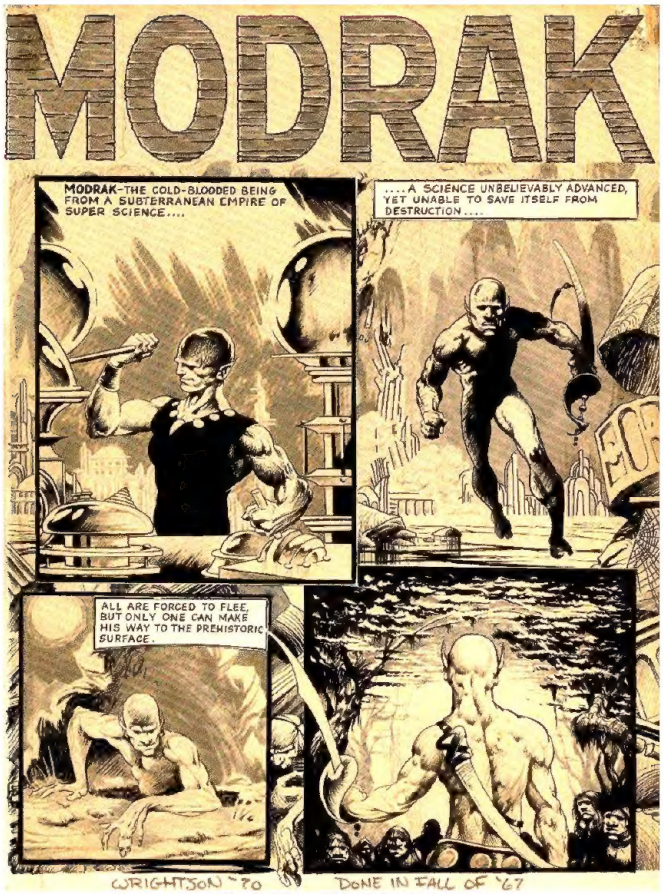
The GHOULISH GATHERING writhing below is the pulsating product of the fearfully fertile imagination of fiendish fan club member BERNI WRIGHTSON, #520, of Baltimore, Maryland. Berni didn't mention if this was a sketch taken from life . . . or DEATH! From the looks of that tombstone in the right hand corner, we may never know! At the rate you CREEPY CLUBBERS are flinging in stories and artwork, we may have to expand facilities next issue to accomodate your convulsive contributions . . . When submitting drawings try not to fold them, and if possible do them in ink or heavy pencils for best possible reproductions. Stories should be typed or in ink as the light is bad in the dungeon and ol' Unc is down to his last three eyes! With any SCARIFYING SKETCH or GORY STORIES, send along your CFC number and tell us your age . . .

Creepy #9

Larry Ivie's Monsters and Heroes #5

Rocket's Blast Comic Collector #125

Gosh Wow #3 original art


MODRAK
MODRAK-THE COLD-BLOODED BEING FROM A SUBTERRANEAN EMPIRE OF SUPER SCIENCE....
....A SCIENCE UNBELIEVABLY ADVANCED, YET UNABLE TO SAVE ITSELF FROM DESTRUCTION....
ALL ARE FORCED TO FLEE, BUT ONLY ONE CAN MAKE HIS WAY TO THE PREHISTORIC SURFACE.
WRIGHTSON '70
DONE IN FALL OF '67

Gosh Wow #3 original art